

Sūrah Munāfiqūn

Central Theme and relationship with the Preceding *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is a supplement to Sūrah Jumu‘ah, the previous *sūrah* at the end of which the weakness found in certain people was unveiled. These people claimed to profess faith, yet were so occupied in their worldly benefits and business interests that if a trade caravan would arrive, they would run towards it abandoning the Prophet (sws) while he would be delivering the Friday sermon. In this *sūrah*, the Hypocrites are discussed. They are the ones who do not have the will and resolve to fulfill any requirement of faith; yet they want that they be regarded worthy in the eyes of the Prophet (sws). For this, they adopted a special tactic: they would repeatedly swear before the Prophet (sws) that they regard him as a Messenger of God. However, the *sūrah* mentions that God swears in response that they are liars. Their deeds bear witness that they neither believe in God nor in His Prophet (sws). They use their oaths as a shield, and hide their hypocrisy behind it. The love of wealth and life has led them to withdraw the step they had taken towards faith. For this reason, the Almighty has sealed their hearts, and they have now been deprived of the ability to understand and reflect.

Analysis of the Discourse

The sequence of meanings of the *sūrah* is very evident. The first section which consists of eight verses discusses the character of the Hypocrites. Their real malady is disclosed in these verses: they are infatuated with the love of this world.

The second section has only three verses. In it, Muslims are warned that the love of wealth and children should not take them away from the remembrance of God. If today they would not properly benefit from their wealth by spending it for the cause of God, they will regret it once their life ends and this regret will be of no use to them.

In other words, the first section points to the real reason for their hypocrisy, and the second emphatically urges the Muslims to guard themselves from it.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ
 إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١) اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا
 يَعْمَلُونَ (٢) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٣) وَإِذَا
 رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُسَنَّدَةٌ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ
 صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَتَى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٤) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ تَعَالَوْا
 يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٥) سَوَاءَ
 عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
 الْفَاسِقِينَ (٦) هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا وَلِلَّهِ
 خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٧) يَقُولُونَ لِنَنْزِعَنَّا إِلَى
 الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا
 يَعْمَلُونَ (٨) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ
 يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٩) وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ
 أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ
 (١٠) وَلَنْ يُؤَخَّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١١)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

When the Hypocrites come to you, they say: "We bear witness that indeed you are God's Messenger." And God knows that you indeed are His Messenger, and God bears witness that these Hypocrites are absolute liars. They use their oaths as a shield, and have withdrawn from the path of God. Indeed, very evil is what they do. This is because they first embraced faith, then renounced their faith; so their hearts were sealed. Thus they became devoid of understanding. (1-3)

And when you see them, their bodily appearance pleases you, and when they speak, you listen to what they say. Yet they are like beams of timber which are rested against a wall. They take every danger to be against them. They are the real enemies. So guard yourself against them. God destroy them! How they have lost their senses. (4)

And when they are told: "Come, God's Prophet will seek forgiveness

for you,” they turn their heads and you see them go away in arrogance. It is equal for them whether you seek forgiveness for them or not, God shall never forgive them. God does not guide the disobedient. (5-6)

It is they who say: “Do not spend on these people who follow God’s Messenger so that they desert him.” And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the Hypocrites cannot understand. They say: “If we return to Madīnah, the dominant will soon drive out the absolutely weak.” However, dominance belongs to God and to His Messenger and to the believers; yet these Hypocrites do not know it. (7-8)

Believes! Let neither your riches nor your children make you indifferent to remembering God. And those who do this should remember that they will surely be the losers. And spend of what We have blessed you with before death befalls any one of you and he longingly says: “Lord! Why did you not give me more respite that I would have spent in charity and would have become among the righteous?” And God never gives respite to a soul when its appointed time arrives. And whatever you do is in God’s knowledge. (9-11)

Explanation

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ
الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ¹

The previous *sūrah* also refers to the hypocritical attitude of a group; however, what was said about them was said in a general manner without pin-pointing anyone. In this *sūrah*, the address is very direct and revealing which means that the character of those Hypocrites is under discussion here who had become so seasoned in their hypocrisy that there was no hope of their reformation. Thus it is about these people that the Prophet (sws) is addressed later in the *sūrah* and told that even if he seeks forgiveness for them, the Almighty will not forgive them. At another instance, the words are that even if he seeks forgiveness for them seventy times, the Almighty has no intention of forgiving them.

I have already explained at other places of this *tafsīr* that the words نَشْهَدُ and وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ signify an oath: the Hypocrites would try to convince the Prophet (sws) through repeated oaths that they were believers. The reason that they had to swear was that their continuous errors had made them so untrustworthy that they themselves realized that unless they

1. When the Hypocrites come to you, they say: “We bear witness that indeed you are God’s Messenger.” And God knows that you indeed are His Messenger, and God bears witness that these Hypocrites are absolute liars.

swore on oath on what they said, no one would believe them. A person who is confident on what he does, never swears needlessly; however, he who is confident in this regard solely relies on his oath. For this very reason, the person who swears a lot is called مَهِينٌ by the Qur'ān: (and heed not every person who is swearer of false oaths who is despicable, (68:10)).

The sentence وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ is extremely eloquent and very apt: as far as the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) is concerned, it does not need their proof. God fully knows that he is His messenger; however, God bears witness that these Hypocrites are falsely testifying.

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ²

In order to protect themselves from being checked by the Prophet (sws), these Hypocrites use their oaths as shields; the purpose is that they continue to be considered sincere towards Islam, and the Prophet (sws) does not doubt them while they continue with their pranks and conspiracies against Islam. In Sūrah Mujādalah (verse 14), one of their conspiracies is referred to: they had deep ties of friendship with a people who had earned the wrath of God: the Jews. On the one hand, they had assured these Jews by swearing oaths that they were with them, and on the other, they had adopted exactly the same policy with the Muslims. After that, this same verse also occurs there with a slight change in words:

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ (١٦:٥٨)

They use their oaths as shield; thus they have withdrawn from the path of God. A humiliating punishment awaits them. (58:16)

In other words, what is said is that through these oaths they claim to have protected themselves from both the Jews and the Muslims, and in this way they have withdrawn the step they had taken for the cause of God. The truth of the matter is that this refuge is very temporary; very soon they will have to face a humiliating punishment.

The word صَدَّ is used both transitively and intransitively. Here as per contextual indications, it is evident that it is used in the latter sense: they did take a step forward towards Islam but then withdrew from this path by seeking refuge with their oaths; they reckon that if only oaths are enough to falsely assure Muslims of their sincerity and to deceive them

2. They use their oaths as a shield, and they have withdrawn from the path of God. Indeed, very evil is what they do.

in this manner, why should they take more initiative and invite perils for themselves. The words إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ rebuke them: they think that they are being very wise and diplomatic; however in the eyes of God this is an absolutely foolish scheme which will lead them to doom.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطَغَىٰ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٣)³

The reason that the Almighty has sealed their hearts and they can no longer act uprightly is stated that they resort to disbelief after professing faith. It is the law and practice of God that if people who are shown the light of Islam by Him value and honour this light, then He increases its glow. On the other hand, if they adopt a contrary attitude, and keep retracting, this light is confiscated from them and their hearts are also sealed. The consequence is that they are deprived of the ability of thinking in the right manner. The reasons because of which the hearts of the Jews were sealed have been mentioned in detail in Sūrah Baqarah. It might be worthwhile to look them up. It is about such people that Jesus (sws) had said: “even what they have with them is taken away.”⁴

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ خِشْبٌ مُّسَدَّدَةٌ يَّحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٤)⁵

This is a graphic picture of these Hypocrites. These brief sentences, one can see, portray them such that no aspect of their inner and outer personalities remains hidden. The first two sentences depict their outer personalities and the last two describe their inner ones. Later, the Prophet (sws) has been asked to beware of them, and simultaneously pity is expressed at their state.

The sentence وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ refers to the apparent attraction in their appearances. It needs to be understood that these Hypocrites were affluent. In the first place, they had amassed riches through both lawful and unlawful means. In the second, they were extremely stingy. Except for their own comfort and luxury, they were not ready to spend

3. This is because they first embraced faith, then renounced their faith; so their hearts were sealed. Thus they became devoid of understanding.

4. I have not been able to find a reference of this quotation in the Bible which the author has quoted from his memory. (Translator)

5. And when you see them, their bodily appearance pleases you, and when they speak, you listen to what they say. Yet they are like beams of timber which are rested against a wall. They take every danger to be against them. They are the real enemies. So guard yourself against them. God destroy them! How they have lost their senses.

even a penny on the religious and collective needs of the society. Their bodies and faces reflected their affluence. Their leader was the famous Hypocrite: ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy. Other members of his group were also very rich and prosperous.

The sentence **وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ** depicts their glibness. When they speak, they would speak so effectively in the support and defence of Islam that they would win the hearts of their addressees. These addressees would listen to them intently. Earlier in the *sūrah*, it has been mentioned that they assure God and His Prophet (sws) of their sincerity by their oaths and eloquent speech. It is mentioned in Sūrah Muḥammad that they expressed their vigour for *jihād*; but when they were actually asked to undertake it, they hid themselves. Since these Hypocrites knew that the Prophet (sws) and the believers were aware of their cowardice, so when they would come to the Prophet (sws) they would try to convince him through effective and moving words that they were earnest exponents of Islam and were ready to sacrifice everything for its cause. Though the Prophet (sws) was fully aware of their inner-selves, he would out of graciousness still listen to their conversation. This would be enough to satisfy them that their powerful and persuasive talks had done the job.

The words **كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشْبٌ مِّنْ سِنْدَةٍ** highlight their inner-selves: even though they have attractive appearances, their hearts are dead. In fact, their hearts have been sealed by the Almighty, as is mentioned in the previous verse. As a result of this spiritual death, their example in the gathering of the Prophet (sws) is as if they are hollow logs of timber which have been dressed up and made to rest against the walls.

The word **صَيْحَةٍ** literally means “a shout”; however, it is also used for danger, and here it is used in this latter sense. The implication is that even though they wanted to assure the Prophet (sws) through their effective yet deceiving words that they were very brave and prepared to offer every sacrifice for the cause of Islam, yet they were great cowards. Wherever a danger appeared, they because of their lack of courage, would think they it was going to land on them. What could be expected of people who are so fainthearted when danger in reality will manifest itself.

The sentence **هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرُهُمْ** alludes to the fact that in order to prove their innocence they are trying to make others doubtful in the eyes of the Prophet (sws), yet they themselves are in fact the real enemies of Islam, and as such the Prophet (sws) should always beware of them. It needs to be kept in consideration that one of their tactics was that they would also blame innocent Muslims for many crimes they themselves would perpetrate so that the Prophet (sws) considers them to be innocent.

The words **قَاتِلْهُمْ اللَّهُ أَمَّا يَوْمَ فَنَعْتَصِمُ** chide them as well as express pity on

them: may God destroy them; how misled are they that every step of theirs is in the wrong direction!

This character of these Hypocrites is portrayed at many instances in the Qur'ān. For the sake of brevity, I am citing below just one instance from Sūrah Baqarah:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ
وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ وَإِذَا
قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَيْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٢٠٤-٢٠٦)

And there are some whose conversation regarding the life of this world does please you and they even make God witness to what is in their hearts; whereas, in fact, they are the deadliest among the enemies. No sooner do they leave you than they hasten to spread disorder in the land and ravish crops and destroy life, and God does not like disorder. And when they are asked: "Have fear of God," their arrogance leads them to sin. So sufficient for them is Hell, and it is a very evil abode. (2:204-206)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٥)

What is mentioned here is the same as what is stated in the previously cited verses of Sūrah Baqarah in the words: أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ (and when they are asked: "have fear of God," their arrogance leads them to sin). What is described in the verse happens when they are called to the presence of the Prophet (sws) when their pranks and plots come to his notice.

The way their arrogant evasion is portrayed from their limbs is expressed by the words: لَوَّا رُؤُوسَهُمْ. This is a very eloquent expression. How this evasion effects the inner-self is stated by the words: يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ. In other words, both their inner and outer selves are highlighted. It needs to be kept in consideration that people who do not have moral courage do not confess or condemn themselves even after their sins are revealed. They fear that if they confess once, they will lose their credibility forever. This weakness of theirs ties them up with sins. This aspect is referred to by the words: أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ of the Sūrah Baqarah verse cited earlier.

6. And when they are told: "Come, God's prophet will seek forgiveness for you," they turn their heads and you see them go away in arrogance.

سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْفَاسِقِينَ (٦)⁷

Stated here is the punishment of their arrogance. The Almighty has addressed the Prophet (sws) and communicated His verdict in this regard. He never blesses people with His guidance who insist on disobedience. He guides only those who are ashamed of their sins, and turn to the Prophet (sws). In Sūrah Nisā, this topic is discussed in the following words:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ
تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا (٤:٦٤)

And if, when they wronged themselves had come to you to seek God's pardon, and if the Prophet had also sought forgiveness for them, they would have found God forgiving and merciful. (4:64)

About those who show arrogance before God and His Prophet (sws), the verdict declared in Sūrah Tawbah is:

اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ (٩:٨٠)

It is the same whether or not you seek forgiveness for them. Even if you seek forgiveness for them seventy times, God will not forgive them. (9:80)

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا وَلِلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٧)⁸

The verse mentions the reason which has made them worthy of God's wrath: so angered is He of them that He will not forgive them even if His Messenger seeks His forgiveness seventy times.

It is mentioned in some narratives that a fight took place between a poor *muhajir* and an *anṣārī* at the spring at which the Prophet (sws) and his army had stopped over in Bani Muṣṭaliq in 6 AH. The *muhajir* slapped the

7. It is equal for them whether you seek forgiveness for them or not, God shall never forgive them. God does not guide the disobedient.

8. It is they who say: "Do not spend on these people who follow God's Messenger so that they desert him." And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the Hypocrites cannot understand.

anṣārī and both called for help from their respective tribesmen. Armed with swords, people from both tribes gathered. Though with the blessing of God the matter was resolved, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy who would always be on the lookout for such opportunities uttered some malicious words which were meant to incite the *anṣār* against the *muḥajirūn*. He said: “In spite of seeking refuge in our house, they are showing enmity to us; whoever has said this has said the truth that if a person feeds a dog and it becomes strong, then it will bite that very person. By God! Now if we return, the noble will definitely turn out the wretched from there.” To the *anṣār* who had gathered there, he said: “You are only enduring the consequence of your own fault. You invited them as guests to your homes and gave them a share of your wealth. By God! Had you desisted from helping them, they would have run away from here long ago.”⁹

While referring to some of these words uttered by him, the verse says that how can God forgive such people whose hearts are filled with such hate and venom against Islam and Muslims!

The words *وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ* are an answer to what ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy had said: this hypocrite thinks that if he and his associates stop helping the *muḥajirūn*, they will be left with no support; the fact of the matter is that all the treasures of the heavens and the earth are in the possession of God. He bestows them on whomsoever He desires and confiscates them from whomsoever He desires; however, since the hearts of these Hypocrites have been sealed, they are unable to understand this reality.

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ
وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ¹⁰ (٨)

This is a reference to the second of the malicious sentences uttered by ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, as alluded to earlier. In order to provoke the *anṣār* against the *muḥajirūn*, he had also said that as soon as they returned to Madīnah, the esteemed and honoured (ie the *anṣār*) should turn out the worthless (ie the *muḥajirūn*). In other words, the proclamation he made was the same as what was the custom and practice of the Arabs in the times of ignorance: This land should only be ruled by the noble and by those who are in authority; this is their right. How can we tolerate people

9. For details, see: Abū al-Fadā’ Ismā’īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* vol. 4, (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1401 AH), 371.

10. They say: “If we return to Madīnah, the dominant will soon drive out the absolutely weak.” However, dominance belongs to God and to His Messenger and to the believers; yet these Hypocrites do not know it.

who have sought refuge with us slap our own people?

The section *وَاللَّهُ الْعَزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* answers this proclamation of the age of *jahiliyyah*: nobility and esteem is for God, His messenger and the believers, and as per a divine practice of God, time has come for its realization; but these Hypocrites know not. In Sūrah Mujādalah, this divine practice is mentioned in the following words:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْلَيْنَ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٥٨: ١٩-٢١)

Those who oppose God and His Messenger shall themselves be humiliated. God has decreed: “I will indeed triumph, and My messengers.” Indeed, powerful is God, the Mighty. (58:19-21)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٩)

Here at the end, Muslims are admonished not to follow the Hypocrites. The love of wealth and children has made them indifferent to God; they have no resolve left in them to do something for the Hereafter. If like them the Muslims also end up forgetting God and the Hereafter while being inebriated with the love of wealth and children, then they should know that this is precisely what real failure and deprivation is. They who forget God, forget their own fate and have been allured by Satan. In Sūrah Mujādalah, such Hypocrites are referred to thus: *اَسْتَحْذَرُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانَ فَإِنَّهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ أُولَئِكَ حُزِبَ الشَّيْطَانُ أَلَا إِنَّ حُزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ* (٥٨: ١٩) (Satan has overpowered them, and made them indifferent to God’s remembrance; they are the party of Satan; and listen up that it is Satan’s party which will surely be the losers. (58:19)

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِي أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠)

The verse describes the way to constantly revive the remembrance of

11. Believes! Let neither your riches nor your children make you indifferent to remembering God. And those who do this should remember that they will surely be the losers.

12. And spend of what We have blessed you with before death befalls any one you and he longingly says: “Lord! Why did you not give me more respite that I would have spent in charity and would have become among the righteous.”

the Almighty, to protect oneself from the trials of wealth and children and to safeguard oneself from the onslaughts of hypocrisy: every person should try before his own death to earn whatever he can for the Hereafter by spending for the cause of God from the wealth God has blessed him with. It should not be the case that he ends up yearning for more time of life when death stares him in the eyes so that he could have spent in charity and thereby be included among the righteous.

In Sūrah Tawbah, a special feature of the character of these Hypocrites is mentioned: they would keep clenching their fists because of miserliness. When they were poor, they would express everywhere their desire to spend generously for the cause of God if He makes them affluent. However, when the Almighty with His grace fulfilled their desire, they withdrew from this desire. As a punishment for this miserliness, the Almighty strengthened in them the roots of hypocrisy, and they were deprived of the opportunity to spend in charity and thereby be regarded among the righteous. The Qur'ānic words are:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَإِنْ آتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمْ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ (٩: ٧٥-٧٧)

And there are those among them who promised themselves, saying: "If God is bountiful to us, we will generously spend in charity and live like the righteous." So when God bestowed His blessing on them they became stingy and turned away by being unmindful. So as a punishment, God bolstered hypocrisy in their hearts. (9:75-77)

It has been explained in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Ḥadīd that those who desist in this world from spending in charity not only become distinct from the righteous among believers by being incriminated with hypocrisy, they will also have to face its consequences in the Hereafter by being made to yearn for what they did. God will raise men and women who spend in charity in this world among the righteous in the next world which will include the truthful and the witnesses to the truth and a light will accompany them and lead them to Paradise. The hypocrite men and women will receive no share from this light. A wall shall obstruct the righteous from them. It will be explained to them there that the condition for being regarded among the righteous was spending for the cause of God from which they desisted in the previous world.

In this verse, the word وَأَكُنْ is in the form of an indefinite vowelless (*muḍāri sākin*) verb and is apparently co-ordinated to فَأَصَدَّقَ which itself is in the accusative. However, in my opinion, the expression وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ is the answer to a suppressed condition. If this suppression is revealed,

then the discourse would be something to the effect: "If I had spent in charity, I would have been among the righteous." Since the textual indication of this condition in the form of فَأَصَدَّقَ is evident, it is suppressed.

وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ¹³ (۱۱)

This yearning will remain a yearning when the time of death will arrive. It will be of no use. Once the respite of life given by God expires, He does not extend it. He also knows that this yearning for spending in charity if they are given respite is absolutely baseless: even if they are granted more time, they will do what they always had been doing.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* with these lines. فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ وَلَهُ الْمُنَّة (for God alone is all gratitude and from alone are all favours)

Lahore,

30th March 1978 AD

19th Rabī' al-Thānī 1398 AH

13. And God never gives respite to a soul when its appointed time arrives. And whatever you do is in God's knowledge.